rise and fall

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rise and fall

by bearclaws

Summary

The very first thing you notice about Hannibal Lecter is his collar.

In a world where Omegas have clawed their way out of years of persecution, Dr Hannibal Lecter has forged his own path. He quickly takes an interest in Will Graham, an Alpha who struggles with his own identity. But can they navigate a relationship in a world where all of Hannibal's decisions require sacrifice?

Canon-divergent omegaverse AU, regular updates, eventual smut.

Notes

this is my first proper omegaverse fic and has some hefty world building behind it; all will be revealed. the plot will loosely follow canon, but for how long I'm not sure! I really hope you enjoy <3 regular updates until completion. :3

Chapter 1

The very first thing you notice about Hannibal Lecter is his collar. Not the high cheekbones, glistening in the harsh overhead lighting, or his pale, warm brown eyes dissecting you strand by dreadful strand. You don't notice his luminous skin or his soft and regal bearing—not at first, anyway. No, the first thing you notice about Hannibal Lecter is the discreet golden chain tightly circling his slender throat. This chain has one telltale difference from a normal piece of jewellery: covering his Adam's apple is a small, round, circular electronic screen. Today this screen is lit a bright red.

Will stared at it for a second, then quickly ripped his gaze away. *Omega*. It had been a while since he'd worked with one. He saw compound Omegas regularly, running errands or out enjoying the fruits of their labour, but it was rare to see someone who had given all that up to work a regular job on top of completing their civil service. His pulse quickened and he took a deep breath. *It's red, so you can't. Not that you would anyway.*

"Tell me, then. How many confessions?"

The man's voice was deep and accented in a slightly exotic way. Will tried to listen to Jack's reply, but was distracted by the feeling of his pulse beating in his wrists as he sat stiffly next to Lecter. He didn't like being reminded of his own body. Tuning back in, Will managed to catch the last of Jack telling them about Freddie Lounds' part in this. "Tasteless," he said, finally chiming in. The new man turned to him, and Will had the very strange feeling he was being picked apart and inspected, like one might do to an antique found in the corner of an estate sale. Will imagined Hannibal picking him up, asking *Is this worth anything?* to the empty room, then putting him back down where he found him.

"Do you have trouble with taste?"

Will wanted to laugh, but stopped himself. Working this job, doing what he did, getting into the minds of killers—yeah, it led to some very non-tasty places. Usually places he didn't want to go. "My thoughts are often not tasty."

He barely recalled the rest of their conversation, delivering lines on autopilot as Hannibal tried to slip audacious fingers into his mind and rummage around, swift and sure. Finding himself increasingly uncomfortable with the way this Dr Lecter could read him, Will soon found a reason to leave. He wasn't going to give either Hannibal or Jack the satisfaction of knowing they understood anything about him, especially things he didn't want to understand himself. "…Now if you'll excuse me, I have to give a lecture on psychoanalysing," he finished, standing to leave. As he stalked away, he felt as if time itself slowed down and pulsated around him and Dr Lecter as the scent of the Omega assaulted his nostrils with its cloying, desperate sweetness. Like berries smothered in honey, like the richest jam falling off your tongue. The unadulterated scent filled Will's body and set every nerve alive. *Omega*. *Omega. How long's it been?*

Take it.

Will swallowed, quickened his pace, and was out the door in a flash. Closing his eyes briefly, he rifled through his memory and counted out days in his head. It was months before he was due on a rut, and either way he was up to date on his suppressants. He was careful. He was controlled. But his suppressants should have dimmed every scent he came across, should have made every Omega smell like nothing to him. It was why he took them—doing his duty to relieve their burden, doing his best to keep his nature reined in. So why could he still feel the thick aroma of blackberry and orange soaked in every pore? He imagined biting into a ripe mango and feeling its juice running down his chin. The vision forced him to open his eyes. *Pull yourself together.* A deep breath, then another, until he felt himself come back to his body.

He lingered some way up the corridor, keeping an eye on Jack's door until it opened and the slim doctor slipped out of the room. Dressed in his fine suit, the doctor was the embodiment of poise. The very air seemed to shine around him, that Omegan shimmer radiating off him in waves. It was unusual to see a glow that strong, Will thought. It made his mouth water involuntarily. As Hannibal left the office, he glanced up the hallway and Will ducked his head down, but he knew he had been spotted. Unable to help himself, he flicked his gaze back up and saw that Hannibal was staring directly at him. Despite being separated by the length of the corridor, he felt the piercing intensity of Lecter's gaze rushing right through his body, through his ribs and out the other side until he felt like he was gasping from it. Then the doctor turned and the spell was broken. Hannibal Lecter walked away without a backward glance, and Will watched him go. He noticed, with a flickering of revulsion, and something else he didn't want to think about, the way the people in the corridor stared at him openly as he walked out, everyone's eyes drawn to the collar looped around Hannibal's soft neck. Will couldn't see his face, but in his mind he could see those lips curving in a cold, graceful smile. His belly throbbed.

Slipping back into Jack's office, he shut the door behind him with a shove and leaned on it. "What the hell was that?"

From behind his desk, Jack glared at him. "That was you being extremely rude to someone who we *need*, Will. Someone who can help us."

Anger ran hot through Will's veins and he took a deep breath, calming himself. He hadn't felt his Alpha urges stirring like this in years, and the dizzying brashness of it upset him. He felt off-kilter, careening through a situation without having any say in it. "I don't need his help."

"Dr Lecter can't help— Look, he's done very well for himself. He's one of the best. You will work with him, *nicely*." Jack's voice was final, and he glanced away from Will, back down to the papers he was rummaging through. Jack didn't want to meddle in the affairs of Alphas and Omegas. And Will knew he didn't have a leg to stand on, refusing to work with Lecter. Omegas were protected, after all—and for good reason, he reminded himself. And let's be honest, it wasn't the fact that he was Omegan, not really. He just didn't want to work with *anyone*. Especially someone who thought they could entertain themselves by sifting through his mind.

But he knew Jack was right. *Eight girls.* There was more at stake here than petty interpersonal politics. So instead, he took another deep breath, then pulled up the corners of

his mouth. “Of course, Jack. You know me. I’m always nice.”

“Good morning, Will. May I come in?”

The dusky morning light poured into Will’s eyes, forcing him to squint around it. Wiping sleep from his eyes, he peered into Hannibal’s face. “Where’s Crawford?”

“Deposed in court. The adventure will be yours and mine today. May I come in?”

Will wondered if that were true, or if Hannibal had orchestrated this for his own gain. He stepped back, conscious of his half-naked body. The doctor was dressed in an outfit that looked sharp and expensive and Will felt shabby in comparison. He hurriedly pulled on some clothes while Hannibal pulled out Tupperwares and a thermos. Will stared at it all in confusion. But after Hannibal explained that he cooked for himself, Will decided he couldn’t ignore the twisting hunger in his belly, so he sat and pulled a plate towards him. The sausage was rich and salty, the scrambled eggs melting in his mouth. “It’s delicious,” he said around a mouthful. “Thank you.”

“My pleasure,” Hannibal replied. Will saw the ghost of a smile playing around Hannibal’s lips, though it was hard to pick it out from the otherwise smooth canvas of the man’s face. His scent wasn’t as strong today, muted in this dingy room, and he didn’t seem to have the glow that Will recalled from Quantico. He turned these thoughts over in his mind as he chewed while Hannibal spoke to him. Every word was lilting, coated with a wry intelligence. Will was quickly becoming aware that there were more layers to this man than first appeared.

“Just keep it professional,” he said.

“Or we could socialise like adults.”

“I don’t find you that interesting.”

At that, Hannibal let a true smile bloom across his face. Will had the distinct impression the gesture was all for his benefit. “Come now, that can’t be true. There’s something about me that people like you find very interesting.”

Will swallowed another mouthful of sausage, then took a sip from his coffee, which spread deep and rich on his tongue. Obviously, he knew what Hannibal meant. He had avoided looking at Hannibal’s collar since he had arrived, but now the man caressed his fingers over the little screen in front, drawing Will’s eyes to it unwillingly. Red again. *Are you disappointed, little beast?*

Rather than betray these thoughts, Will looked down at his plate and scooped up another forkful of eggs. He allowed a small shrug to roll over his shoulders. “You aren’t the first

Omega I've worked with."

"Worked with, or tolerated?"

Will snorted. "You could say the same for anyone, Omega or not." A silence stretched between them. Will studied the way the soft light fell through the thin motel curtains, coating Hannibal's clear skin with patterns of gold. "It has nothing to do with the fact that you're an Omega, Dr Lecter. I don't care about that. But I want to catch this guy, and I don't want you to slow me down. No offence, but I have no idea if you know what you're doing."

Hannibal fiddled with his fork and met Will's eyes. The intensity blazing in those deep, dark pools made the hairs on the back of Will's neck stand up. As if Hannibal were pulling slowly on a thread, Will felt something inside of him begin to unravel. But just as quickly as he had seen the flash of it, the emotion was gone, and the doctor's eyes were just the normal warm brown again, and all his thread spooled back up inside him, nestling in his guts. Hannibal's eyes were beautiful, flecked with amber; but they were also blank and empty, and made Will feel sad. He couldn't know for sure, but Will knew that Hannibal's age meant it was more than likely that he had lived through the Referendum, which meant that he had grown up in an age where his genetics were a curse, not a gift like some people might say they were now. The thought of it made him uncomfortable. He pushed it aside, looking back down at his plate. It didn't matter; they had a job to do, and it was best that they didn't get personal.

"I hope that I'll prove satisfactory," Hannibal replied, pouring them both more coffee. "Now, Crawford tells me you have a knack for monsters?"

As they worked in the little cabin on the construction site, looking for any lead on the Shrike case, Will was acutely aware of the leers and stares Hannibal received as people clocked onto his collar, his Omegan air. He was even propositioned by a broad man with dirt smudged across his face, his mouth too wide and gaping, looking like a frog trying to catch a juicy fly as he ran his hand over Hannibal's back. Acid flooded the back of his tongue as he tracked the movement, the confident surety that this man had the right to take what he thought he was owed. But Hannibal's collar was red, and the man couldn't do a thing as the doctor stepped away from him with a dignity he didn't deserve. Averting his gaze, Will grit his teeth and carried another box of files to the car as Hannibal slipped back inside the cabin, away from prying eyes.

After, as they climbed back in the car to chase their lead, Will couldn't help but ask, his voice perhaps a shade too angry, "How can you stand it?"

Hannibal's reply was mild, detached. "When the hunter is in the woods, does the deer curse itself for being born prey?"

Will glanced over to where Hannibal was sitting in the passenger seat and studied his profile gleaming in the light of the day. *What game are you playing?* A stray strand of hair fell into

Hannibal's eyes, and Will had to resist the sudden and unwelcome urge to reach out and brush it away. He didn't believe that Hannibal thought of himself as prey for one second, but if he was trying to put on a facade of vulnerability, Will would let him. He knew what it felt like to want people to underestimate you. Too bad life had dealt him a different hand. He started the car and moved into drive, tightening his hands on the steering wheel and turning his mind back to the task at hand. They had a killer to catch.

Chapter 2

Everything happened so quickly.

The kitchen filled with blood. It was all over his hands and swallowing the floor. He smelled the bitter burning iron of it, felt the girl's fleshy throat pliant and too forgiving under his fingertips. Hands wet with adrenaline, Will struggled to keep a hold on the girl. *Wife dead, husband dead, daughter dying. Do something!* Panic filled every cell, a deep rushing wave of fear, only broken by soft hands holding his own, by a man with eyes like a hawk and a confidence that betrayed his nature. Will felt a strong surge of shame wash through him as Hannibal took over. He caught Abigail's eyes, staring into the watery, glassy pools as the world shut down around him, quiet slamming on every sense as he focused on her. *Save her. Please. I'm sorry.*

As the paramedics and police arrived, every single one gaped openly at the Omega with blood on his hands, at the Omega standing up in the world and *doing* something. No one said anything. No one dared. The paramedics worked with him, and they moved into the ambulance, and then they were gone.

When Will saw Hannibal in the hospital, sleeping next to Abigail, he wanted to cry. Instead he steeled himself and walked into the room. He studied Hannibal for a long moment, taking in the way his eyelids vibrated gently as he slept, listened to his subtle breathing. He couldn't smell him here; all he could smell was the scent of blood trapped in his nose. It made him want to be sick.

The room hummed with the sound of the beeping and whirring machines keeping Abigail alive. Slowly, Will sat down in the chair next to Hannibal and moved his gaze to the girl in the bed. He wondered what had brought Hannibal here. Probably the same reason Will had come: guilt. But something else, too. Desire? His stomach twisted as he thought about the realities of Hannibal's situation. He would never be able to bear his own children; Omegas were always sterilised when they left the compound. It was part of their civic duty, reducing and calming down their heats when they weren't in a controlled environment. Personally, Will thought it was barbaric. So did many others, especially in the Freedom movements. But there was also a large proportion of society, mainly Omegas, who were more than happy with their place in the world and with the money and protection that the state now offered them after years of persecution.

Now, looking between this peculiar man and the girl in the bed who looked so small, Will was made starkly aware of just how much Hannibal had given up.

A few days later, Hannibal was struggling to not stab himself out of boredom. His patients had all been insufferable: inane problems, boring stories. And now his last patient of the day before his newest acquisition was being unforgivably rude. Not happy with Lecter's therapeutic observations of his own self-sabotage, he was spitting vitriol Hannibal's way, and Hannibal had had enough. He stood, gesturing to the door. "I think that's enough for today."

The petulant man jumped to his feet and scowled. Jabbing a pudgy finger in Hannibal's direction, he eyed the glittering golden chain around his neck. Hannibal could see the spittle gathering at the corners of his mouth. The patient was a tall, broad Beta, moving through the world on the easy current of mediocrity. He imagined reaching into the man's mouth and shoving his forearm down his throat until the sinew ripped apart around his fingers and he could glory in the peace and quiet.

"Watch your fucking mouth. One day, that'll be green, and you won't feel so high and mighty then, will you?"

At that, all pretence of warmth drained from Hannibal's face. He felt himself grow rigid with barely suppressed rage, and smoothed it down inside himself. Voice icy, he replied, "If that's how you feel, then I believe our psychiatrist–patient relationship has come to an end."

The man's finger wobbled in mid-air, then he spat on the floor and stormed out. Wrinkling his nose, Hannibal watched him go with a flat expression. His fingers itched to follow him, to draw a blade across his neck and make him realise that he had no idea who he was talking to. But his newest client had arrived, and that should cheer him up. He quickly schooled his face back into his calm mask. Two warm brown eyes sunk in a smooth, shining face. With just the lightest touch, he scented the air. "Will, please. Come in."

Will stood, holding his jacket folded up in his arms. The faded green of his button-down brought out the light in his eyes. Taut muscles shifted beneath corduroy. His scent: pine, coffee, that faint musk. *Alpha. Alpha.* Hannibal's mouth watered a little. Will walked past Hannibal as he held the door open, and as he did so Hannibal felt the thick, green moss of Will's scent caress his nostrils and imbue his soul with a momentary bliss. It sparked something in him that he detested, that primal reaction, his genetics betraying him; Alpha scent burrowing into his subconscious until he wanted to whine and thrash around on the floor from the pain of resisting it. He blinked, and took a deep breath. Breathe the need away. He had been on this earth for fifty years, and had been an Omega for forty of those. He knew how to control himself.

"Everything alright?" Will asked as they situated themselves in his office, Will wandering around the room nonchalantly, discarding his jacket on the armchair. Hannibal stood still, poised by his desk. He remained silent, prompting Will to continue. "With your last patient, I mean. I heard— I wasn't trying, but I heard—"

"I'm afraid he wasn't the nicest man. Nothing I'm not used to, though. A psychiatrist can never be too careful. Mind the rug; I'll need to clean it later." Hannibal smiled blandly, conscious of the way Will's eyes darted around the room, of the thick veins lining the back of his hand and spiderwebbing up his arms. Turning on his heel, Will turned back to face

Hannibal, who could see the tart questions on his face. He continued, “I’ve worked hard, and some people don’t like that. Some people still look at me and all they see is *Omega*.”

And you, Will? What do you see?

“Why do you? Work, I mean?”

A disappointing question. Hannibal’s lip curled slightly. “What would you have me rather do? Lock myself in the compound with all the others?”

“Well, I mean…” Will ran a hand through his hair and chuckled softly. “I’m just surprised.”

Hannibal looked away, running a hand over the paperweight on his desk. It was shaped like an elephant tusk, but made of smooth, black marble. Suddenly, he was consumed by a vision of jamming it into Will’s eyes and watching blood pour thick down his cheeks. He had thought, when he had met Will, that he had finally found someone who might be interesting. But it seemed like he had just found another person who didn’t see anything about him except the chain around his neck. He asked his next question softly. “You’d give up your freedom that easily?”

“Are you telling me that you’re free now?”

Fingers tensing around the paperweight, Hannibal trembled with the effort of holding himself together. The man before him thought he knew him, and worse than all that, Will *pitied* him. The thought soured on his tongue like the last peaches of summer: the bitter taste of regret. “That life would never suit me.” Hannibal turned to his desk, the conversation at an end, and picked up Will’s evaluation, which he had signed off with a flourish earlier that afternoon. He handed it to Will.

“What’s this?”

“Your psychological evaluation. You’re totally functional and more or less sane.”

“Did you just rubber-stamp me?”

Hannibal bristled a little. He was tired, browbeaten with yet another misunderstanding, with yet another person who only saw the worst parts of him. He forced himself to smile. Everything Will thought about him were things that he was used to, things that he had learned to use to his advantage. When people underestimate you, they never expect the knife. “Yes. Now we can proceed unobstructed by paperwork.”

They spent the rest of the session talking about the events of the last days, about Abigail and Hobbs and Will’s obvious, deep-rooted internal struggles. As they talked, Hannibal soon relaxed back into his mask. Slipping into his role as therapist felt natural, and he tried to put Will’s misstep out of his mind. He tried to forget the feel of the chain around his neck, strangling him with everything it told the world. He tried not to think of the fact that soon the little screen would be green, and anyone on the street would be able to use him as they wished, and he could say nothing about it. No wonder Will pitied him.

He tried not to imagine Will as the man to take him, to mark him, to knot and claim him. But it was difficult: he could barely focus on their conversation because he was so overwhelmed by his *scent*, by his decadent Alpha musk. The thick stench of Alpha usually turned Hannibal's stomach, associated as it was with years of violations, but there was a sweetness to Will's smell that he couldn't get enough of. It was the freshness of a winter morning in the forest. It was espresso dripping into a chipped mug. It made his belly heat and groin ache, blood threatening to betray him.

The only problem was the way the scent was curdled with the obvious tang of rut suppressants, and this was what Hannibal focused on, perking up as he processed this interesting tidbit. Not every Alpha was keen to suppress their "natural urges". Side effects, cancer concerns, not to mention the pure fact that to fuck during your rut was one of the greatest pleasures a person could apparently enjoy. Some said it was the same for Omegas in heat, but Hannibal had never derived any pleasure from the act. When Hannibal had been younger and suppressants first appeared on the market, they had quickly become popular, and Hannibal's life became much easier for a few years. But then, slowly, he had noticed fewer and fewer Alphas taking them. Once the compounds had been established, he began hearing more and more concerns about what suppressants did to people, how they weren't needed anymore, how they ruined sex. He could easily feel threatened by their waning usage and the accompanied risk that Alphas were to him, except for the fact that he had long ago vowed not to feel threatened by another Alpha ever again in his life.

Luckily, by this point, he had become a man of means and connection, and a well-placed bribe saved him months at a time without the hassle of an induced heat. He resented every check he wrote, but he resented the crawling feel of strangers' hands on him even more. By this point, he didn't even want to think about the inordinate amounts of money he had spent just to keep his collar red and his life under his own control.

These thoughts swirled around Hannibal's mind as he and Will continued talking, the evening dripping away. As they spoke, it became obvious to Hannibal that Will knew nothing of this history, or indeed his own nature as an Alpha. He had grown up in a time of relative Omegan safety. When Alphas were told to keep themselves under control. He knew nothing of what it had used to be like for Omegas, and he knew nothing about just how savage Alphas could be if they listened to their heart's desires.

Yes, he wanted to say. *Yes, this is freedom. Don't pity me, Will. I chose this life all for myself.*

But he said nothing of the sort. Instead, he stared into Will's deep ocean eyes and filed away this new information, thinking about how much sweeter Will would smell once he was off those meds.

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